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56 | 2



THE REVITALIZED
ROADSIDE MARKET

The roadside market, once considered a source of only loose-change income for some farmers, was supposed to be an out-of-date marketing method and slip from the rural scene. Not so. Many farmers are finding highway retailing a way of offsetting sagging farm income.

Two USDA experts give us an inside look at today's roadside market industry: Charles Porter, editor of the Economic Research Service's quarterly Vegetable Situation report and head of the Vegetable Section, and James Milmoe, a marketing specialist with the Plentiful Foods Division of the Consumer and Marketing Service. Mr. Milmoe conducted research in roadside marketing while associated with the University of Delaware.

THE REVITALIZED ROADSIDE MARKET

Milmoe: Roadside markets have always been looked upon as sort of a stepchild of the regular marketing system; consequently research has been limited in this field.

However, one study made by the University of Delaware in 1965 located around 5,000 bona fide markets, nationally. By bona fide markets, I mean ones operated by farmers who grow some of the fresh produce for sale.

Although there haven't been any new national surveys on the subject to prove this point, people working in this field feel that the numbers are growing. Farmers in more and more States are forming roadside marketing associations and holding annual conferences.

Porter: The major roadside marketing areas are in the Great Lakes, Northeast, and Middle Atlantic States.

Annually, roadside markets may sell as much as 10 percent of both the total fresh fruit crop of approximately 180 million hundredweight and the 225 million hundredweight of vegetables.

These operations are very important to individual farmers, especially small-scale farmers near a city. For them, roadside marketing can mean living on the farm, owning a business, and possibly making a profit from farming.

For the large operators, it provides an outlet for surplus production and a chance to earn more of the consumer's food dollar.

I have been associated with farmers who weren't large enough to compete and sell effectively to the wholesale markets due to lack of capital and resources but did have enough to start their own roadside markets. Some of these farmers have since expanded the size and scope of their operations to where they're now doing over a six-figure yearly business.

The national study on roadside markets in 1965 showed that 45 percent of the operators had yearly sales of \$10,000 and over and 8 percent were doing over \$60,000 worth of business.

Milmoe: Certainly, today's roadside markets often bear little resemblance to the stands of yesteryear.

Many operators stay open almost year-round, beginning in early spring with flowers and shrubs and maybe even some bedding plants. Then they swing into the berry season, followed by sweet corn and tomatoes. Later come melons, apples, pumpkins for Halloween and Thanksgiving, and finally—wrapping up the sales year—Christmas trees. A lot depends on the location, of course.

Most market operators have a main item that they call their drawing card—be it fresh sweet corn, peaches, or tomatoes—that catches the customer's eye. Generally, they grow their major volume items on their farm.

However, since today's shopper



doesn't like to buy 5 pounds of tomatoes at one place and then have to drive down the road to get some onions, most operators also buy supplemental items from nearby farmers or large city terminal markets.

Porter: You know, I've met many farmers who are concerned about starting roadside stands because they don't know how to deal with the public. They are farm oriented, not market oriented.

A way around this problem is to work with someone who likes to deal with people. In fact, the operator of one of the most successful markets I know says, "People tend to make me nervous. I can only take about an hour of this direct selling a day, whereas my wife loves it."

If a farmer's wife or other members of the family can relieve him of these direct selling duties, he can spend more time with the production side.

Marketing people have long thought roadside marketing was a traditional

and historic method of selling that would ease out with the passing of time. Well, this certainly wasn't the case.

As the whole food industry grows to meet our swelling population numbers, I think roadside marketing will grow.

Roadside markets have a lot of things going for them. They're sort of a return to the old days. They offer personalized service. They sell farm fresh produce. I think they've got a solid future.

Milmoe: I would like to think that the roadside market movement would get stronger and stronger, but as I look at the number of small farmers selling off their land I'm not sure.

The opportunity to grow is good. The American shopper is always looking for something fresh and new. However, it is going to take an effort on the part of agricultural planners to make this type of marketing outlet work for farmers.



TUBER TOTALS

For years statisticians estimated production of the multimillion dollar potato crop by asking farmers about acreage and yield prospects. Last September and October objective methods were used to measure the fall potato crop in Maine, Idaho, Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota, Washington, and Oregon.

Some 1,100 samples—each consisting of two rows 20 feet long—came in for special observation just before harvest. Enumerators hired and trained by SRS field offices provided data for estimates by counting potato hills in the rows and then digging sample tubers for laboratory determination of size and quality.

The program is designed to overcome weaknesses of using just the mail survey—it removes bias resulting from personal judgment and it provides a

representative sample of the crop for scientific analysis.

How does SRS make an objective yield survey? Let's retrace the footsteps of one enumerator.

The enumerator—who may be a schoolteacher, retired farmer, or part-time farmer—walks out to a potato field selected statistically. His equipment includes a shovel and white canvas bag with measuring tape, flagging ribbons, florist stakes, survey forms, and instruction manual.

He starts at a field corner and counts a prescribed number of rows, then paces down the row a set distance. He stakes out the 20-foot section for measurements and counts.

After counting all the hills in this plot, he digs three hills and counts the potatoes. The tubers are bagged and mailed to the SRS laboratory for grading, inspection, and weighing. He then repeats the process in another part of the field.

A count of the potato hills combined with the average weight per hill from the three hills dug gives an indication of potential yield for the sample plot. This can be projected to an estimate of yield per acre.

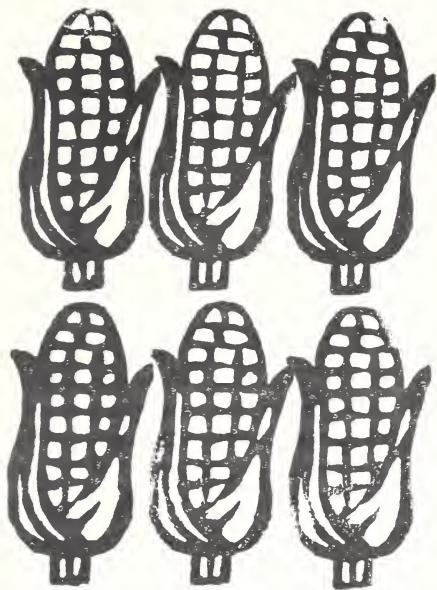
Information from a sufficient number of samples plus acreage data provide an estimate of State and national production.

How are the fields selected?

The sample fields are selected from acreages of potatoes reported by growers on a list developed by SRS. The chance of any field being chosen is proportional to the size of the field. In other words, a 40-acre field is twice as likely to be chosen as a 20-acre potato field.

After harvest, our enumerator returns to check up on harvesting loss. He again lays out a plot in a predetermined random location of the field, picks up all potatoes, cleans them, and places them in bags to be mailed in to determine the harvesting loss.

The outcome of the enumerator's job is an improved forecast of potato production for producers, shippers, and processors.



CORN CHANGES

The 1971 corn growing season brought more than just an increase in harvested acres, new yield highs, and the largest crop recorded. It also brought some changes in production practices in parts of the major corn area that may hint of further adjustments.

Each year SRS counts corn plants in sample fields. Farmers in most recent seasons have tended to increase the population per acre to help boost yields. But in four East North Central States—Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and Wisconsin

—producers smarting from blight damage lowered plantings of corn per acre in 1971. Losses to blight in 1970 had been heaviest in narrow row, highly populated fields.

Yields in each State were higher in 1971 than 1970 and three of the States had higher yields and the other the same yield as in 1969. Obviously, 1970 yields alone wouldn't offer a fair comparison.

Meanwhile, producers in three of five Western Corn Belt States, which had escaped much of the blight, continued to add plantings in 1971. Yields followed past trends in only two of the three States. Of the five States, yields rose in Iowa and Missouri, and declined in Minnesota, Nebraska, and South Dakota compared with 1969.

Undoubtedly some of the increase in yields can be traced to better weather, different fertilizer applications, blight resistant seed, and other production alterations.

The four East North Central States with their decline in plant populations produced about 2.1 billion bushels of corn from roughly 21 million acres for an average yield of 96 bushels per acre. In 1969, these States averaged 88 bushels.

The five Western Corn Belt States raised some 2.5 billion bushels in 1971 on about 28.6 million acres with an average yield of 80 bushels. The 1969 yield average was about the same.

State	Plant population per acre			Yield per acre		
	1969	1970	1971	1969	1970	1971
East North Central States:						
Illinois	18,600	18,100	18,000	98	74	102
Indiana	17,000	17,900	17,000	96	74	96
Ohio	17,700	18,200	16,900	85	77	89
Wisconsin	17,600	18,800	18,100	83	80	97
Western Corn Belt States:						
Iowa	17,400	18,000	18,100	98	86	103
Minnesota	18,100	18,400	18,600	85	85	83
Missouri	15,000	14,600	14,800	70	61	87
Nebraska	15,600	16,400	16,000	93	75	85
South Dakota	12,000	12,200	11,900	57	41	43

SPOTLIGHT ON ILLINOIS

Illinois . . . a name that's nearly synonymous with farming. The reason: 84 percent of the land area is in farms—a total of 30 million acres.

"I guess you could say agriculture is the hub of economic activity in Illinois," states Robert Moats, statistician in charge of the Illinois Crop and Livestock Reporting Service.

Looking up from a stack of papers on his desk he adds, "Besides marketing nearly \$2.7 billion worth of crops, livestock, and livestock products every year, we also rank high in the Nation in several processing operations that add billions to our State's economy annually."

Some of these are meatpacking, dairy manufacturing, soybean, corn, feed, and vegetable processing.

"Illinois' fertile soil, favorable climate, good transportation and markets, and the industry of its people have made it a rich agricultural empire," Moats notes. Illinois ranks sec-

ond among the States in cash receipts from the sale of crops, seventh in all livestock, and fourth in all commodities.

The nature of Illinois makes it possible for its farmers to grow a wide variety of crops: cotton in the delta at the junction of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers; processing vegetables in the central and north; apples and peaches on the ridges where air drainage is good; and especially corn, soybeans, winter wheat, oats, and hay everywhere. Fresh market vegetables, popcorn, greenhouse and nursery products, flowers and foliage plants, horseradish, and even some broomcorn are other products which are grown commercially.

"Did you know that we are the 'horseradish king' and rank first in onion set production?" Moats says with a grin, "I like to add some flavor to our State whenever possible." Illinois is also an important producer of pumpkins

Illinois farmers market over a million fed cattle a year to rank seventh in the Nation.



with nearly 6,000 acres raised commercially.

How does Illinois size up to the rest of the Nation?

In 1971, Illinois farmers produced 1.04 billion bushels of corn, the second largest crop ever for them and 19 percent of the U.S. total. Soybean production was a record for the State at 236 million bushels, and exceeded all other States and accounted for 20 percent of the U.S. crop. Illinois' farmers marketed nearly 11 million hogs in 1970—ranking second to Iowa—and 1.2 million fed cattle to rank seventh in the Nation.

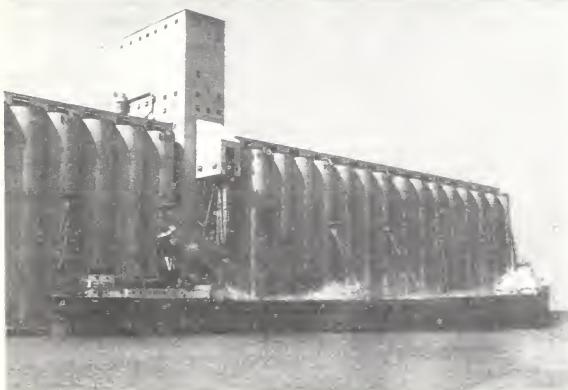
Illinois also leads all States in the value of agricultural products exported. During the year ending June 30, 1971, Illinois share of the total agricultural exports from the United States was \$655 million, over 8 percent of the total. Illinois led in exports of soybeans, soybean meal and oil, and feed grains. It was also an

important exporter of livestock products.

Building an agricultural empire is expensive. The investment is large. Illinois farmland and buildings alone are worth \$14 billion. Current farm operating expenses—feed, seed, fertilizer, livestock, fuel, labor, and miscellaneous materials and services—add to \$2.2 billion annually.

Although Illinois is well known as a major producer of field crops and livestock, it also ranks high in production of many other products. For example, Illinois farmers again led all other States in red clover seed production with 8.6 million pounds—clean seed—in 1971, nearly one-fifth of the U.S. total. It's an important State in production of flowers and foliage plants with sales valued at \$8.1 million in 1970. Illinois ranks fourth among the States in production of roses and fifth in gladiolas.

Left: To feed its growing livestock numbers, Illinois needs lots of corn. That they have—around 19 percent of the total U.S. production. Below: A freighter loads up on Lake Michigan with some Illinois grain to be sent overseas.



A LITTLE HELP

At 4:10 p.m. on December 10, President Nixon penned into law the Revenue Act of 1971. Among the law's many provisions are several that farmers will want to check into further: new depreciation schedules for equipment; reinstatement of the investment credit writeoff; an increased personal exemption level; and the repeal of the excise tax on cars and light trucks.

The act provides farmers a second option for computing depreciation of equipment and machinery placed into service after 1970.

If the farmer elects to use the new method—called Asset Depreciation Range System—he may now shorten or lengthen the timespan used to recover the cost of the item through depreciation by around 20 percent.

For example, if a farmer buys a \$5,000 tractor, which has an expected work life of 10 years, depreciation can now be spread over 8 to 12 years.

The 8 year rate would permit the farmer to deduct \$625 a year from his taxes, based on the straight line depreciation method. The 12 year approach would permit the farmer to deduct \$416.67 a year. The old system would have meant a straight \$500 reduction annually for 10 years.

What difference does it make how much a person can deduct each year as long as he gets the full deduction in the long run? If a farmer expects a high income year, he may choose to depreciate new equipment quickly to receive a larger single-year deduction.

On the other hand, prospects for a low income year might make him consider spreading out the depreciation to take advantage of the deductions over more years. However, be sure to note that once a useful life period is selected it can't be changed.

The 7 percent investment credit, in effect from 1962 to 1969, was restored in last year's law. All equipment ordered after March 31, 1971 or acquired after August 15, is eligible for this tax saving.

Full credit is now given for qualified



machinery or equipment with a useful life of 7 or more years, two-thirds credit for 5 to 6 years, and one-third credit for 3 to 4 years. No credit is allowed for equipment with a useful life of less than 3 years.

Briefly, here's how the investment credit works. Suppose a farmer bought a new piece of machinery last year that cost him \$10,000 and was expected to last 10 years. He could deduct \$700—7 percent of the cost of the machinery—along with his other deductions from his 1971 tax return.

However, if he sold that machine before its useful life was up, he would have to pay back that portion of the deduction that covers the remaining years.

For example, if he sold it 4 years after purchase he would have to refund two-thirds of \$700 to the Government because assets kept for 4 years qualify for only one-third of the 7 percent credit.

Although the investment credit

NOTHING CERTAIN BUT...

Taxes on farm real estate rose just as certainly as ever during 1970—the latest year for which data are available. The volume gained 9 percent over the year before and extended an uptrend that's been uninterrupted since 1942.

The grand total in 1970 was \$2.5 billion. Farmers in all but four States paid more farmland taxes than in 1969—with the biggest increases occurring in Minnesota, 17.2 percent, and Virginia, 15.8 percent. Fourteen States registered increases of 10 to 15 percent.

The four States where taxes dipped from the year before were Alaska, Delaware, Kansas, and Mississippi. All of the decreases were slight.

On a per acre basis, the average tax bite was \$2.47, compared with \$2.27 in 1969. The range was from \$20.78 an acre in New Jersey to \$0.20 in New Mexico.

The average tax was more than \$5 an acre in 12 States, between \$2 and \$5 in 13 States, between \$1 and \$2 in 13 States, and less than \$1 in 12 States.

The effective tax on U.S. farmland—that's the tax collectors' way of saying how much farmers paid on each \$100 of full land value—was \$1.18 in 1970, up from \$1.12 the prior year.

Between 1961–67 the effective tax rate had stayed fairly constant at about \$1 an acre. Since then it's gone up as increases in taxes levied have outpaced real estate appreciation.

The higher tax collections are largely the result of rapidly growing education and welfare expenditures by State and local governments, plus stepped-up reappraisal activities in a number of States.

Local governments get about 85 percent of their revenue from the property tax. About half of this revenue they spend on education, for which local costs rose 36.1 percent between 1965 and 1969.

Farmland taxes took 4.4 percent of gross farm income in 1970, up from 4.1 percent the year before.



clause is basically the same as in the past, one change important to farmers is that livestock—other than horses—acquired for work, breeding, or dairy purposes now qualify for the writeoff.

Along more general lines, the 7-percent excise tax on passenger cars was repealed effective August 15, 1971 while the 10-percent levy on light-duty trucks—weighing 10,000 pounds or less—was repealed effective September 23, 1971.

Personal exemptions were also upped to \$675 for the 1971 tax year and \$750 thereafter. The minimum standard deduction was retained at 13 percent of adjusted gross income with a maximum of \$1,500 for 1971. However, the deduction was raised to 15 percent with a maximum of \$2,000 for 1972 and thereafter.

The low income allowance—how much you can make before any of it is taxable—was changed to \$1,050 for 1971 and \$1,300 for 1972 and the years following.



RURAL-CITY MERGER

As the rural counties near cities give way to metropolitan growth, the addition of new residents creates demands on services.

One approach to meeting these needs is to consolidate the governments of the city and the adjacent rural county.

This tack was taken in a southern State in the 1960's. A study sponsored by Economic Research Service asked residents of the former county their reactions to the changed government structure and services, and checked on the costs and revenues after consolidation.

The most significant benefit was an improvement in the total community's school system, especially in the rural areas.

The quality of education was equalized throughout the county. More money was spent per capita in both the city and county, including a four-fold increase for textbooks, higher salaries for teachers, plus additional administrative and supervisory staffs.

The pupil-teacher ratio was decreased and teachers' standards were raised. Teaching materials and aids were more readily available because of centralized warehousing. Consolidation also made possible better health and other services for pupils.

Law enforcement improved through merged city and county personnel and equipment. Officers in the full metropolitan area had the specialized equipment and professional assistance normally unavailable to a rural force.

Road maintenance improved with the purchase of specialized equipment beyond the financial reach of either the city or county separately.

Consolidation opened more park and recreational facilities, especially for city residents who now had access to more services in the county.

The new government's services were not without a higher price tag. Expenditures rose 7 percent above those paid previously by the city and county together. The major burden for meeting the cost increase was placed on suburban residents. The first year, the property tax rate outside the city advanced 34 percent, while city dwellers saw their tax rate shrink 1 percent.

Some adjustment to the property tax situation was made in the second year after consolidation. The metropolitan government expanded revenue sources with a 1 percent sales tax and user charge for sewer and water services.

About half the persons interviewed in the suburbs were dissatisfied with their higher taxes. Nevertheless, almost three-fifths of them agreed that the tax burden was more fairly shared than before the merger.

Researchers found that more than four-fifths of suburban residents rated services as satisfactory, and two-thirds said they were more efficient.

Politically, nearly 70 percent of the suburban residents believed they received at least as much attention from their representatives as they had under the previous county government.

A DATE WITH FOOD

Mildred Jones, Chicago housewife, mother of two, thought it was the packaging date. Jane Smith, also of Chicago, also with two children, disagreed. To her it meant the date after which the product should not be used. Ethel Roberts viewed it yet another way—as showing the freshness of the foods.

Mrs. Jones, Smith, and Roberts (not real names, of course) were defining the “freshness codes”—or open dating program—used by a large retail food chain in Chicago. The women were three of the 429 shoppers interviewed last year in a USDA study to determine consumer reaction to open dating. That’s where the last date an item should be sold by a retail food store is clearly indicated on the package.

The study was a cooperative project in which the Statistical Reporting Service devised the questionnaire and selected the sample while the Economic Research Service analyzed the results.

The Chicago food chain in the survey began open dating many of its own private brand items—more than 150 in all—about the middle of 1970. The launching of the chain’s freshness codes (open dates) was accompanied by a promotional campaign that included both newspaper ads and point-of-purchase materials explaining the meaning of the codes and where to find them on various food packages.

The campaign stressed the point that while the freshness codes showed the last permissible date for store sale, reasonable time was allowed for home storage and use even if the item were purchased on the pull date.

However, by the spring of 1971, the time of the USDA survey, most of the shoppers interviewed were misty as to

the meaning of the codes, even though a good many said they had used the codes at least once.

Only 20 percent of the 429 shoppers correctly interpreted the codes as the pull date for the store. Most thought the dates indicated the freshness of the foods. About a fifth thought they weren’t supposed to use the foods after the date shown.

Regardless of their misconceptions about the freshness codes, most shoppers favored them—feeling they assured fresh food products.

Store managers were pretty pleased with the open dating program, too, at least in the 18 outlets surveyed. Many of the managers mentioned the freshness codes were as helpful to them as to their customers because they made stock rotation easier for store employees. The managers also saw a big plus in increased consumer confidence once secretive dating codes were abandoned.

Although they felt that consumers did not fully understand the meaning of open dates and needed more information on the “at home” shelf life built into the products, the consensus among food store managers was that open dating was a good thing that hopefully will spread to more suppliers in the food industry.

SAY CHEESE

Pizza, cheese spreads, dips, and just plain cheese and crackers are helping push cheese consumption in this country up . . . up . . . up.

In fact, cheese is fast approaching butter as the largest outlet for manufactured milk. Last year, 21 billion pounds of milk, almost a fifth of the total supply, went into a record 2.4 billion pounds of cheese.

Cheese consumption climbed steadily in the 1960's. Over the last decade, per capita consumption grew by more than a third—reaching 12.2 pounds per person during 1971. Per capita consumption will probably continue to expand—and may reach 14–15 pounds by the end of this decade.



outlook

Digested from outlook reports of the Economic Research Service.
Forecasts based on information available through December 1, 1971

TOBACCO . . . Despite a smaller tobacco crop and carryover in 1971-72, U.S. supplies remain only 2 percent less than last marketing year. Use may total 4 to 5 percent below the 1.93 billion pounds of last season, but still exceed the 1971 crop of 1.8 billion. Carryover at the close of 1971-72 could be off slightly from the 3.7 billion pounds at the start.



ACRES FOR 1972 . . . Again this year farmers are getting an early look at what the Nation's fields may produce next fall. The Crop Reporting Board, in a special release, summarized planting intentions as of January 1, 1972 for eight crops in 35 major producing States. The usual Planting Intentions Report will be issued March 16. Here's how farmers' intentions stack up now, compared with last year:

Crop	Selected States		U.S. total 1971 planted acres
	1972 January acreage intentions	1971 planted acres	
Million			
Corn	70.0	72.9	74.1
Sorghum	19.8	21.3	21.3
Oats	20.8	21.7	22.0
Barley	9.7	10.7	11.1
Durum wheat	2.7	2.8	2.8
Other spring wheat	12.0	13.1	13.1
Soybeans	44.3	42.8	43.2
Upland cotton	13.1	12.2	12.2

LARGER FARM RECEIPTS and net incomes are expected in the first half of 1972 over a year earlier as marketings and Government payments increase and prices remain firm. Larger consumer after-tax incomes will mean stronger demand. Also, the slowing rise in farm production expenses, due partly to lower feed costs, is another encouraging factor. Realized net farm income may rise substantially over the low levels of the first half of 1971, economists say.

●

PRICE STRENGTH for most farm products should continue well into 1972. Gains are expected for meat animals, dairy products, and poultry and eggs. Reduced beginning stocks, expanding markets, and price supports should limit the impact of the bumper 1971 harvest. Cotton prices are above a year ago. And although prices will remain low for grains as the new year progresses, higher prices are expected for tobacco and soybeans.

●

CONSUMER SPENDING . . . A slackening in retail price increases, the Food Stamp program, and other factors could spur sales of food and other farm products. Last year, consumer disposable income averaged around 8 percent above 1970's level and gains will likely continue into 1972 despite restraints on wages under Phase II procedures.

●

LOW WOOL . . . The 1972 domestic wool supply is likely to decline with the cuts producers made in sheep numbers last year. The 1971 lamb crop is estimated off 4 percent from 1970, and sheep and lamb slaughter last fall was up 1 to 2 percent from a year earlier.

●

IMPORTED WOOL prices are likely to average higher this year. World wool prices picked up last summer and the revaluation of many foreign currencies—plus the devaluation of our dollar—will make imported wools and fabrics cost more here, lending strength to American wool prices. Longer term benefits may come out of a textile agreement between the United States and Asian producers, limiting imports into this country of woolens and manmade fabrics other than cotton.

●

FERTILIZER PRICES . . . The key to nitrogen fertilizer prices in 1972 will be corn acreage because over a third of the fertilizer goes on this crop. The general outlook is for the level of farm prices of most nitrogen and potash fertilizers to flatten out in the year ahead. On the other hand, short supplies may move phosphate fertilizer prices close to ceilings approved under price controls.

NITROGEN use will probably equal the 7.9 million tons of the 1970-71 season. Although expected reductions in corn acreage will decrease nitrogen use, applications on replacement crops will be partially offsetting.

HONORABLE INTENTIONS . . . Turkey growers in the 20 important producing States plan to raise only 1 percent more birds this year. If producers carry out intentions, the 1972 turkey crop would total about 116.6 million birds compared with 115 million raised in 1971. Producers intend to raise 102.9 million heavy breed turkeys and 13.8 million light breeds. The number of turkeys actually raised will depend on price of feed, supply and price of hatching eggs and poultts, and prices received for turkeys during the next few months.

STATISTICAL BAROMETER

Item	1969	1970	Latest data available
Prices received by farmers (1967=100)	108	110	120 Jan. 1972
Prices paid, interest, taxes, wage rates (1967=100)	109	114	123 Jan. 1972
Ratio ¹ (1967=100)	99	96	98 Jan. 1972
Consumer price index:			
All items (1967=100)	110	116	121 Dec. 1971
Food (1967=100)	109	115	120 Dec. 1971
Average value of land per acre (1967=100)	115	118	124 Nov. 1971
Total value of farm real estate (\$ bil.)	207.3	210.7	221.1 Nov. 1971
Disposable personal income (\$ bil.)	634.2	687.8	754.8 (3)
Expenditures for food (\$ bil.)	106.1	114.0	120.0 (3)
Share of income spent for food (percent)	16.7	16.6	15.9 (3)
Farm food market basket: ²			
Retail cost (\$)	1,176	1,223	1,248 Nov. 1971
Farm value (\$)	480	476	484 Nov. 1971
Farmer's share of retail cost (percent)	41	39	39 Nov. 1971
Agricultural exports (\$ bil.)	6.4	7.2	.8 Dec. 1971
Agricultural imports (\$ bil.)	4.5	5.7	.5 Dec. 1971
Realized gross farm income (\$ bil.)	55.5	56.6	60.9 (3)
Production expenses (\$ bil.)	38.7	40.9	43.6 (3)
Realized net farm income (\$ bil.)	16.8	15.7	17.3 (3)

¹ Ratio of index of prices received by farmers to index of prices paid, interest, taxes, and farm wage rates.

² Average quantities per family and single person households bought by wage and clerical workers 1960-61 based on Bureau of Labor Statistics figures.

³ Annual rate, seasonally adjusted fourth quarter.



WONDER CROP

A green field during the winter in the Plains States usually indicates leaves of winter wheat. In the future, it may be a field of triticale (trit-uh-kay-lee), a cross between wheat and rye.

Some agricultural research teams think that such new cereal grains as triticale may add valuable ammunition to the Green Revolution to help overcome the shortage of quality protein as well as calories in the world's food supply.

While most cereals range from about 8 to 15 percent in total protein content, they are inferior in digestibility and the amino acid balance of their protein.

Lysine, tryptophan, and methionine are among the essential amino acids that are either nutritionally unavailable or in short supply in many cereals. Proponents of triticale say the crop may have better amino balance and digestibility than other cereals.

Triticale is an infant among cereal grains; its development started around

the turn of the century. Much work still has to be done if it is to meet the requirements in many environments of adaptations, winterhardiness, straw strength, and early maturity.

However, even the most skeptical critics agree that triticale's better strains would qualify it as a valuable supplemental feed grain crop, possibly acting as a buffer against such calamities as the Southern corn leaf blight.

At the present, unofficial estimates put triticale acres for harvest at around 200,000 in this country. USDA and experiment station tests from 1967 to 1970 show the yields range from half to almost equal those of wheat and barley.

VEGETABLE WARMER

Smudge pots and other warming methods used by vegetable growers may eventually give way to a USDA development, insulating foam.

The nontoxic, biodegradable foam engulfs tender young vegetable crops and keeps them up to 22 degrees warmer than plants not foamed, says the Agricultural Research Service.

ARS has been testing the material in Texas but reports there is no reason why the product wouldn't work in other parts of the country.

Along with the foam material the scientists have developed a foam generator for field application as well as a shallow trench planting technique.

Cost of protection by foam will run about \$30 per acre.

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